

REMARKS

This application has been further carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated September 15, 2008. Claims 20, 24, 25, 27 and 29 remain pending in the application, of which Claims 20, 24, 25 and 27 are independent. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Claims 20, 24, 25, 27 and 29 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 7,042,585 (Whitmarsh) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,348,971 (Owa) and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,822,754 (Shiohara). Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested.

The invention concerns selecting a print shop to send a single print order to by performing a two step selection process. In the invention, a user apparatus notifies a print management apparatus of a use condition input by a user that includes information designating an area where a print shop is located. The print management apparatus searches for print shops meeting the use condition and the results are provided to the user apparatus. The user apparatus obtains the print shop information, in advance, for a plurality of print shops satisfying the use condition as candidates of print shops to be designated by respective print orders of a plurality of print data different from each other. The user apparatus then forms single print data using a printer driver in accordance with a print condition that is different from the use condition and which does not include the information designating the area where the print shop is located. The user apparatus then analyzes the formed single print data and automatically judges whether each of the plurality of print shops can print the formed single print data based on the print condition and a print ability of each of the plurality of print shops. A selection is then made in by a user

operation of a print shop to order print processing from among those print shops judged as being able to print the formed print data, and a print order, including the designation of the selected print shop, is formed accordingly.

Referring specifically to the claims, amended independent Claim 20 is directed to a user apparatus that communicates with a print management apparatus via a network, comprising notifying means for notifying said print management apparatus of a use condition which is set according to an operation of a user, the use condition including information for designating an area where a print shop having a print apparatus is located, print shop information obtaining means for obtaining, in advance, print shop information for a plurality of print shops each satisfying the notified use condition, from said print management apparatus as candidates of print shops to be designated by respective print orders of a plurality of print data different from each other, print data forming means for forming single print data by using a printer driver installed in said user apparatus, in accordance with a print condition which is set according to the operation of the user, the print condition being different from the use condition and not including the information for designating the area where the print shop having the print apparatus is located, judgment means for analyzing the single print data formed by said print data forming means, and automatically judging whether each of the plurality of print shops included in the print shop information obtained in advance by said print shop information obtaining means can print said single print data, on the basis of the print condition of the single print data and a print ability of each of the plurality of print shops, selection means for selecting, in accordance with a user operation, a print shop to order print processing of said single print data formed by said print data forming means, from among the print shops judged by said

judgment means as the print shops which can print the formed print data, and print order forming means for forming a print order, including the designation of the selected print shop.

Claims 24 is a system claim that includes the user apparatus of Claim 20, while Claims 25 and 27 are computer medium and method claims, respectively, that substantially correspond to apparatus Claim 20.

The applied art, alone or in any permissible combination, is not seen to disclose or to suggest the features of the invention, and in particular, is not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the features of a user apparatus, which communicates with a print management apparatus via a network, i) obtaining, in advance, print shop information for a plurality of print shops each satisfying a notified use condition, which includes an area where a print shop is located, from the print management apparatus as candidates of print shops to be designated by respective print orders of a plurality of print data different from each other, ii) analyzing a single print data formed by a print data forming means, and automatically judging whether each of the plurality of print shops included in the print shop information obtained in advance can print the single print data, on the basis of the print condition of the single print data and a print ability of each of the plurality of print shops, and iii) selecting, in accordance with a user operation, a print shop to order print processing of the formed single print data, from among the print shops judged as the print shops which can print the formed print data.

Whitmarsh discloses a print job brokering system that compares a print request from a customer with a print ability of each of a plurality of print providers, and selects a print provider from the print providers which satisfy the comparison matching of

the print request and the print ability. That is, Whitmarsh merely teaches a one-step selection process selecting the print provider to which the print request is to be sent, which at best, may be seen to correspond to the searching for a print shop based on a use condition. However, Whitmarsh is not seen to teach the process of the invention, and in particular, is not seen to disclose or to suggest the features of a user apparatus, which communicates with a print management apparatus via a network, i) obtaining, in advance, print shop information for a plurality of print shops each satisfying a notified use condition, which includes an area where a print shop is located, from the print management apparatus as candidates of print shops to be designated by respective print orders of a plurality of print data different from each other, ii) analyzing a single print data formed by a print data forming means, and automatically judging whether each of the plurality of print shops included in the print shop information obtained in advance can print the single print data, on the basis of the print condition of the single print data and a print ability of each of the plurality of print shops, and iii) selecting, in accordance with a user operation, a print shop to order print processing of the formed single print data, from among the print shops judged as the print shops which can print the formed print data.

Owa is merely seen to disclose that a user can designate a printing location as a print condition and an optimum printer which satisfies the print condition is automatically selected. However, Owa is not seen to teach anything that, when combined with Whitmarsh, would have resulted in the features of a user apparatus, which communicates with a print management apparatus via a network, i) obtaining, in advance, print shop information for a plurality of print shops each satisfying a notified use condition, which includes an area where a print shop is located, from the print management apparatus

as candidates of print shops to be designated by respective print orders of a plurality of print data different from each other, ii) analyzing a single print data formed by a print data forming means, and automatically judging whether each of the plurality of print shops included in the print shop information obtained in advance can print the single print data, on the basis of the print condition of the single print data and a print ability of each of the plurality of print shops, and iii) selecting, in accordance with a user operation, a print shop to order print processing of the formed single print data, from among the print shops judged as the print shops which can print the formed print data.

Shiohara is merely seen to disclose a system for selecting a printer for processing a print job based on availability of the printer. This system sends a temporary print request to each of a plurality of print apparatuses before transmission of an exact print request to obtain print processing information (e.g., print wait time) from each print apparatus, and the selects the print apparatus on the basis of the obtained print processing information to send thereto the exact print request. However, like Whitmarsh and Owa, Shiohara is not seen to disclose or to suggest anything that would have resulted in the features of a user apparatus, which communicates with a print management apparatus via a network, i) obtaining, in advance, print shop information for a plurality of print shops each satisfying a notified use condition, which includes an area where a print shop is located, from the print management apparatus as candidates of print shops to be designated by respective print orders of a plurality of print data different from each other, ii) analyzing a single print data formed by a print data forming means, and automatically judging whether each of the plurality of print shops included in the print shop information obtained in advance can print the single print data, on the basis of the print condition of the single print

data and a print ability of each of the plurality of print shops, and iii) selecting, in accordance with a user operation, a print shop to order print processing of the formed single print data, from among the print shops judged as the print shops which can print the formed print data.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Claims 20, 24, 25 and 27, as well as the claims dependent therefrom, are believed to be allowable.

No other matters having been raised, the entire application is believed to be in condition for allowance and such action is respectfully requested at the Examiner's earliest convenience.

Applicants undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa, California office at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

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